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DANTE AND BEATRICE

A PLAY FOUNDED ON INCIDENTS IN
DANTE'S *VITA NUOVA*

BY

EMILY UNDERDOWN

(NORLEY CHESTER),

Author of "Songs and Sonnets," "Dante Vignettes,"
"Stories from Dante, &c."

LONDON:
SWAN SONNENSCHEIN & CO., Lim.
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PREFACE.

IN the following Play, suggested by incidents in Dante's *Vita Nuova*, the narrative of that work has been followed as closely as seemed compatible with dramatic construction. The principal deviations are the introduction of Scene IV. at an earlier point in the story than the corresponding incident in the *Vita Nuova*, the placing of Beatrice's death simultaneously with Dante's account of his illness and dream instead of somewhat later, and the interpolation of the scenes between Beatrice, Giovanna, and Primavera (Scene VI.), and between Beatrice and Casella (Scene IX.), which are only indirectly associated with passages in Dante's work. The exigencies of the drama have also caused Giovanna and Primavera to figure much more prominently and to be introduced as two separate personages, whereas by Dante (*Vita Nuova XXIV.*) the latter is simply a fancy name bestowed on Giovanna and is only spoken of once; a name has been given to the lady generally known as the "lady of the screen"; and the character of Tessa has been introduced and made to figure as the unnamed bride of *Vita Nuova XIV.* In introducing the idea that Beatrice not only knew of Dante's love for her, but to some extent responded, considerable licence has been taken.

The sonnet in Scene VI. is a translation from "Piangete, Amanti" (*Vita Nuova VIII.*), and the song in Scene IX. an adaptation from "Ballata io vo." (*Vita Nuova XII.*). In the latter a metre has been purposely chosen that lends itself more easily to musical setting than the complicated one of the original. In other instances occasional lines or portions of lines actually translated from Dante's work have been indicated by italics, and where passages occur in which the general outline of the same has been somewhat closely followed a footnote, giving reference, will be found. I should wish to take this opportunity of expressing my cordial acknowledgments to Miss Elsie Fogerty, who was good enough to go through the play in Manuscript and to give me the benefit of her advice and large practical experience on several points connected with the stage arrangements ; to Miss Isabel Bonus, whose designs for the costumes and properties will be found in the Costume Edition, and whose kind and sympathetic interest in the work greatly assisted me; and to Mr. Rutland Boughton, whose admirable arrangement of the musical portion cannot fail to add effectiveness to any stage production.*

---

* For stage directions, descriptions and illustrations of costumes, properties, &c., see Acting and Costume editions.

SCENES.

SCENE I.—TABLEAU: Dante's second meeting with Beatrice.

SCENE II.—Dante's Chamber. His first vision of Love's appearance.

SCENE III.—An Open Space in Florence. The ladies mock at Dante.

SCENE IV.—An Open Space in Florence. May-Day and Bridal Processions. Dante's confusion at approach of Beatrice; he confides his woe to Guido.

SCENE V.—A Street in Florence. Dante makes another lady the screen for his love.

SCENE VI.—Beatrice's Sitting-room. Dante is blamed by the ladies.

SCENE VII.—TABLEAU: Beatrice denies her salutation to Dante.

SCENE VIII.—Dante's Chamber. His second vision of Love.

SCENE IX.—Beatrice's Sitting-room. Casella discloses the secret of Dante's love for her in a song written by Dante.

SCENE X.—TABLEAU: Dante's dream of Love leading him to behold the dead Beatrice (after the painting by Dante G. Rossetti).

SCENE XI.—Dante's Chamber: Dante on his sick-bed, watched by ladies, to whom he relates his dreams. Funeral procession of Beatrice passes outside.

SCENE XII.—TABLEAU: Dante's vision of the Glorified Beatrice.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Dante, the Florentine poet and lover of Beatrice.

Guido, the friend and brother-poet of Dante.

Casella, a musician and singer of Dante's songs.

Beatrice, a Florentine lady; daughter of Folco Portinari.

Primavera, **Giovanna**, **Tessa**, **Nella**,	Florentine ladies.

Love, a symbolical figure who appears to Dante in visions.

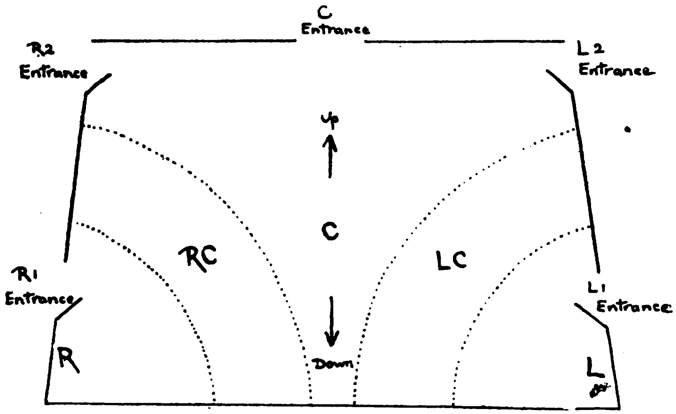
Three Ladies, in attendance on Dante.

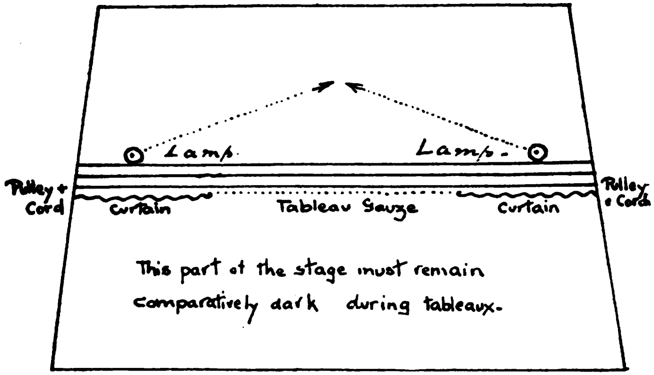
Two Ladies, in attendance on Beatrice.

Ladies in the processions, Bridesmaids, Children, &c

STAGE DIRECTIONS.

NAMES OF STAGE POSITIONS.





This part of the stage must remain comparatively dark during tableaux.

DIAGRAM OF TABLEAU LIGHTS.

STAGE DIRECTIONS.

STAGE.

No scenery is necessary, and an artistically-draped background will be found sufficient, but for the tableaux Scenes I. and VII. and for Scene V. it will be a great improvement if a painted scene representing a quaint street can be used. For the same tableaux and for Scene V. a low wall should also be represented (see diagram). It could easily be made of canvas placed over a wooden framework and painted to represent stone. For the tableaux and scenes where it is not required and where the raised stage is exposed it can be pushed out of sight behind the side curtain. If this wall is not used a screen will be required for Dante to lean against in the scenes where the wall should be.

The best colours for the background are bronze or dull green. The latter has advantages, but care must be taken to select a shade that will not clash with any of the green costumes. The floor should be covered with wide floor canvas of a neutral tint.

The ordinary platform should be framed and draped, and the stage should slope upward from front to back at the proportion of half an inch to the foot. At about halfway across it should be raised by two or three steps, and this raised stage should be used for all the tableaux.

Between these two divisions of the stage there must be curtains uniform in colour with the rest of the stage drapery and so arranged that they can be drawn backwards and forwards according to the space occupied by the tableau behind. This can be regulated by tape marks on the cords by which the curtains are pulled, and should be used at rehearsal with the number of the tableau marked on them to ensure the opening being right.

For the tableaux it will be found effective to have also a drop curtain of gauze in front of the raised stage. This should be tightly strained and fastened at the bottom to a lath to prevent creases. It could also be used with good effect in Scenes II., III., and VIII., where Love should speak to Dante from behind it. For Scenes IV. and V. it will of course be drawn up, as the whole of the stage will be required.

The framework of the stage should be of wood about two and a half inches thick, and covered with "paper-hanger's canvas" or sacking, over which art muslin can be laid in fairly full folds.

LIGHTING.

Where gas is to be used for footlights a pipe can easily be laid down from the nearest pipe in the wall. Incandescent or reflecting burners are the best to use, and a black-painted board, lined with zinc, should stand between the audience and the lights, slanted so as to reflect light on to the stage. On the raised stage there should be two strong standard lamps fitted with Benetfink reflectors. They should stand just out of sight at L. and R., and can be moved as required for each tableau.

A limelight fixed high up on either side so that its shadow will fall well on the stage will be found very effective in the two last tableaux.

If electric light be available four flexible switches with 18-candle power incandescents can be used hung on light wooden standards of the required height.*

The properties can all be managed without difficulty, with the exception of Love's wings, which will require special care. Feathers should be used if possible, or an imitation of them could be made with painted cardboard, but it is recommended that they should be procured from a proper theatrical costumier.

The following paragraph from the pen of Miss Elsie Fogerty, by whom many valuable suggestions for the stage arrangements of this play have been kindly made, is too important not to give verbatim:—

"No uncovered light, matches, candles, or hand lamps should be used behind the scenes on any account; it is impossible to avoid risk of fire with them. A large pail of water in which a sheet is soaking should always be at hand behind the stage if any flimsy materials are used for the dresses." †

CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES.

In stage representations the character of Dante will require very careful study, as much will depend on by-play and expression. In that of Beatrice the idea of her growing interest and belief in Dante—an interest and belief much greater than she herself is at first aware—must be carefully borne in mind. She should be portrayed as stately and dignified, but at the same time gracious and tender, while Primavera is arch and shallow, and Giovanna merry and thoughtless.

---

* See Introduction to Tennyson's "Princess" (Swan Sonnenschein), edited by Miss Elsie Fogerty.

† Introduction to Tennyson's "Princess" by Elsie Fogerty (Swan Sonnenschein's Series of Standard Plays for Amateur Performances), for which see also further practical details for stage and lighting, &c.

For Scene IV. the following description of May Day festivities from *Villani's Chronicle* (Bk. vii. 132) may be found useful :—

"And by reason of well-being and joy, every year on May Day at the corners of the streets and squares wooden pavilions were erected, draped with brightly coloured cloths and silks, and in them gathered bands of noble youths clad in new garments, while through the streets passed processions of fair women and girls crowned with garlands, some playing instruments, while others danced two by two in stately order to the music."

DANTE—Tall, thin, dark hair and complexion. Dress, in every scene but the last three, a close-fitting robe of dark red, with white neckband and undersleeves, a cloak of rather a brighter shade of red draped on the right shoulder, and a hood to match the cloak. In the three last scenes this costume must be exchanged for one similar in design, but of a dull dark blue-green colour, the under-robe and neck and sleeve bands being of rather a lighter shade than the cloak and hood. The shoes and stockings should in both cases match the darker part of the costume. For indoor scenes the cloak may be dropped if preferred, but the hood should be made separately and be retained throughout.

GUIDO—Tall; bright, cheerful face. Dress similar in design to that of Dante, but in orange and brown.

BEATRICE—Fair, with a quantity of golden or auburn hair. Dress, for all the scenes before Scene X., a flowing under-robe with sleeves full to wrist, of some soft white woollen material, such as crépon. Over-drapery of the same hanging loosely from an ornamental yoke, caught on the right hip with a fancy buckle or large jewel, and trailing on the ground at the back. For outdoor scenes a head-dress matching the drapery fastened on the head and falling as a veil behind. For the tableau Scene X. this costume should be replaced by simple draperies of the same caught on the breast and falling over the arms in sweeping folds to the ground. The hair must be hanging loosely and no ornaments of any kind be worn. In Scene XII. a silk under-robe of bright flame colour trailing round the feet, a loosely flowing cloak of bright green, a long veil of white cambric falling from the head to the feet, leaving the face exposed, and a crown of olive leaves.

The other ladies' dresses should be slightly varied in design from that of Beatrice (see Costume Edition), and of different colours, *e.g.*

PRIMAVERA—Under-robe of grass green, over-drapery a paler shade of the same, caught round the waist with a girdle.

GIOVANNA—Under-robe of pale rose, over-drapery a deeper shade.

TESSA (in Scene III.)—Under-robe of soft grey blue, over-drapery a paler shade of the same.

NELLA—Under-robe pale orange, over-drapery a deeper shade of the same.

BEATRICE'S ATTENDANT LADIES—Both auburn hair, the dress of one who in Scene X. stands at R. entirely emerald green; the other, under-robe of pale sage green, over-drapery myrtle green.

DANTE'S ATTENDANT LADIES—1st, Two shades of grey violet; 2nd, two shades of dull blue; 3rd, two shades of dark claret.

For outdoor scenes a loose cloak fastened by jewels at either the throat or the shoulders may be worn by all the ladies. They should be of the same material and colour as the rest of costume, and can be varied to match either the under-robe or the drapery. Head-dresses similar to that of Beatrice should also be used for the outdoor scenes, and should also match the costume, or as a variety be of white. They must be of the same woollen material as the dresses. The hair should be parted in the middle, waving at the sides, and gathered into low coils behind. Shoes and stockings should match the dresses.

PROCESSIONS in Scene IV. *1st Procession*—Combinations of soft shades, *e.g.*, salmon pinks, light mauves, and cinammon browns. Wreaths of coloured flowers.

2nd Procession. TESSA—Flowing dress of white silk or satin, a long veil of white cambric falling to the ground and leaving the face exposed, a wreath of white flowers.

BRIDESMAIDS—Dresses similar to the bride. No veils. Wreaths of red roses.

CHILDREN SCATTERING FLOWERS—Soft shades of blue greys, pinks, yellows.

LOVE—A straight robe of light vermilion silk or crêpe draped on to the shoulder, leaving the arms bare. A scarf of gold Liberty tissue passing under the left arm and caught on the right shoulder with a cockle shell. Wings light vermilion, shading to pink. Flesh-coloured stockings no shoes.

STAGE PROPERTIES.

Scene I.—Low wall.

Scene II.—Couch, dark green cushions.

Scene III.—Four low stools covered with green, or imitation trunks of trees.

Scene IV.—Tall wooden standards painted green and decked with festoons of flowers and ribbons.

Scene V.—Low wall.

Scene VI.—Antique double seat, low stool, spinning wheel, or high-backed chair.

Scene VII.—Low wall.

Scene VIII.—Couch, dark green cushions.

Scene IX.—Furniture as in Scene VI.

Scene X.—Couch with high support for back, crimson draperies, coverlet of rather deeper shade than draperies; long white cambric veil, containing hawthorn blossoms; red poppies.

Scene XI.—Couch, crimson pillows and coverlet; three low seats, a table, metal jug, and goblet. A bell to be softly tolled behind the scene as the funeral procession passes.

Scene XII.—Same as Scene XI. Draped stool or ottoman about three feet high for Beatrice to stand upon.

HAND PROPERTIES.

DANTE—Scene III., a book. Scene VIII., some tablets and a style.

BEATRICE — Scene V., a missal. Scene VI an embroidery frame and silks, a coarse needle. Scene IX a folio.

PRIMAVERA AND GIOVANNA—Scene III., baskets of flowers and a garland. Scene VI., skeins of coloured silks.

TESSA—Scene III., basket of flowers and wreath.

NELLA—Scene V., a missal.

LOVE—Scenes I. and XII., a laurel wreath. Scene X., white arrow and bunch of apple blossom.

LADIES IN PROCESSION—Scene IV., four quaint musical instruments (see Costume Edition), garlands.

THIRD LADY—Scene XI., a fan.

CHILDREN—Scene IV., baskets of flowers.

This wondrous lady appeared to me clad in purest white between two gentle ladies older than herself, and passing along a street she turned her eyes towards that part where I was standing very timidly, and by her ineffable courtesy saluted me with such graciousness that I seemed then to behold the very limits of blessedness.

—*Vita Nuova III.*

SCENE I.

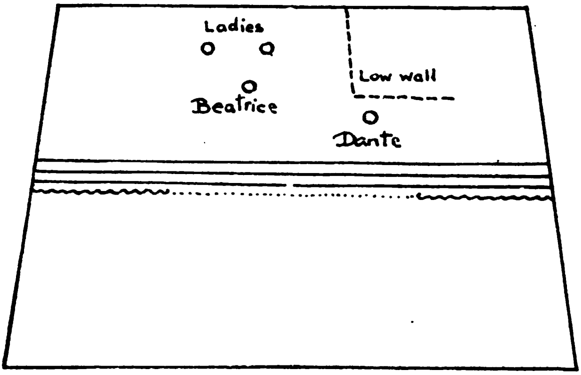


TABLEAU.

DANTE'S SECOND MEETING WITH BEATRICE.

A STREET IN FLORENCE.

DANTE *stands at* L. *with timid, downcast eyes, while* BEATRICE *and her two attendant ladies face towards him as they pass down the stage from* C.

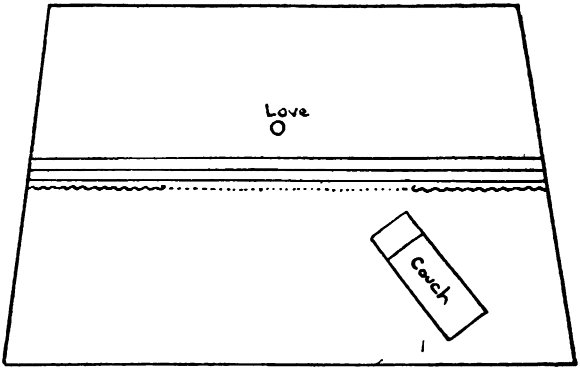
BEATRICE *is smiling at* DANTE *in the act of greeting him.*

All the actors should be on the raised part of the stage, and Beatrice be slightly in advance of the other ladies.

He [Love] spake many things of which I understood but few, and amongst them I understood these, "I am thy Lord."

—*Vita Nuova III.*

SCENE II.



DANTE'S CHAMBER.

DANTE *lies asleep on a couch across* L.C. *The stage is in shadow. Soft music is heard, and the back of the stage slowly opens, revealing* LOVE, *who stands behind in a bright light.*

Love (*very softly*). Dante!

[DANTE *stirs uneasily but does not awake*].

Love (more loudly). Dante!

[*A pause, during which* DANTE *slowly turns in the direction of* LOVE.]

Love. Dante! *Behold thy Lord.*

Slowly assumes a sitting position.

Dante. Bright shape, whence comest thou? I know thee not.

Love. Soon shalt thou learn to know me.
[*Brief pause.*]

I am Love.

Points upward and speaks with great fervour.

That Love which leads men to the dewy heights,
That Love which guides men to the starry spheres,
That Love which knows not passion's counterfeit,
But seeks some far-off unattained ideal

Pauses and then bends forward, and speaks in a deeper tone of voice

And has no lower aim once seeking it.
I am that Love which bears all for love's sake,
Seeks not its own but still the loved one's good,

Voice slightly raised.

Forgets itself and holds itself as naught,
Will welcome pains, and agony, and death
To serve, however slightly, the beloved.

Music ceases.

Dost know me now?

With conviction. He slowly rises during this speech.

Dante. In truth *thou art my Lord.*
It was thy shaft that in my boyhood's day
First pierced my heart at sight of one most fair,
A maid, whose tender years had then comprised
The mystic number nine. I saw her clad

With fervour.

In childish robe of noble crimson hue,
And decked and girdled as beseemed her youth;
Then at the sight the spirit of my life
With thrilling rapture through my pulses sped,
And hastening homeward humbly I declared,
In secret chamber communing alone,

Love gives a gesture of approval.

"*A God hath come stronger than I to rule.*"
Full oft I waited but to see her pass
As through the streets in purity she went,

Musingly.

And ever seemed she not to be of earth,
So godlike, so exalted, was her mien.
'Tis but to-day I saw her once again,

Slowly, as though recalling what he describes.

A child no longer but a woman grown;
Clad in pure white as well beseemed she went
While I in trembling awe awaited her,

As though relating some great and astonishing event.

And as she passed, oh! wondrous blessed chance,
Her gentle eyes straight on to me she turned,
And with all queenlike grace saluted me.
Then, rapt in ecstasy, my spirit sang,

Gazes as at some far-off vision.

While all the length, and height, and breadth of bliss,*
In glorious vision seemed at once revealed.

At this point he slowly resumes his seat.

Homeward I hastened as if borne by wings,
To seek the solitude my spirit craved,
And undisturbed to ponder o'er my joy.
Then as I mused soft sleep it seems drew near,
And e'er I knew it I had sunk to rest.

Love. That gracious lady is the fair ideal
Which thou henceforward must essay to serve.
Be true to her, and great reward awaits thee.

In an eager whisper.

Dante. Of that reward fain would I further know.

Love. The penalty first hear. Thou shalt be scorned
By lesser souls who follow what is base;
For thee the sneer, the pointed thumb, the taunt,
Misunderstanding, solitude, and grief:
To wander wearily and find no rest,
To feel a flame burn and consume thy heart,
Torment thy spirit and thy peace destroy.
Art ready still to serve?

Dante. And the reward?

Love. Sometimes the Lady of thy Love may smile
And give thee greeting as she did to-day,
Sometimes it e'en may chance her gentle voice
Let fall some utt'rance which shall reach thy ear,
Or as she passes where thou stand'st unseen
Her trailing gown may brush against thy form;
Or her soft hand may rest a moment's life—

---

*See *V. N.*, III.

A moment's life no more than that– in thine.
Art thou content to serve for this alone?

With a hasty gesture, to check too much hope on the part of Dante.

Dante. I am content to serve for this alone.

Rises and moves a step or two in the direction of Love.

Love (with fervour). This is not all. Another prize awaits.

[*Holds out a laurel wreath to* DANTE, *who sinks on his knees.*]

Music.

The poet's laurel, Dante, is for thee
If thou wilt follow where I lead before,
Speak what I breathe and what I bid set down,
The *sweet new style*[*] is thine, Oh, favoured son!
And genius beckons thee whom Love awaits.
For thee it is decreed to mount the stars,
For thee by paths of bitter pain and woe
To reach those heights undreamt by ecstasy,
And taste *the banquet* of thy soul's desire.
Say, wilt thou follow?

Dante (with clasped hands and upward gaze). Master, I follow; where thou lead'st I go!

[*The back of the stage slowly closes, concealing* LOVE. DANTE *remains kneeling. Soft music.*] [*Curtain.*

---

[*] *Pur. xxiv., 52—57.*

And I perceiving the evil questioning they made me . . . replied to them that it was Love who thus ruled over me. And when they asked, "For whom hath Love thus caused thee to be undone?" I looked at them smilingly and made no answer.

—*Vita Nuova IV.*

SCENE III.

An open space. PRIMAVERA, GIOVANNA, *and* TESSA *seated at* C. *They each have a basket of flowers from which one is twining a wreath while the other two work at a long garland which they hold between them.*

Giov. (*to* PRIM.). Hast seen young Dante, Alighieri's son,
Since he returned with academic fame
Here to his home in Florence?

Prim. But yester noon
He came with Guido* to my father's house.

Tessa. And hath he altered much with foreign life,
With study in Bologna and elsewhere,
Or comes he back to us the same grave youth,
With sad stern lips, and steadfast dreamy eyes,
Who lately left us?

Prim. In truth he is the same,
And over grave I must confess for me;
Complacently. And yet a jest will break through that reserve
Which makes one think of scholars and of books,
With a wry face Of musty tomes and dry philosophy.
With a toss of the head. I made him smile, why once he even laughed.

---

* Guido Cavalcanti, the Florentine poet referred to by Dante as his friend both in the *V. N.* and *Inf. x.*

Tessa (*laughingly*). Oh ! you would make an
Aristotle laugh,
Your saucy eye no man could well resist
From Guido of poetic amorous fame,
To old Latini * steeped in dullest lore.

Prim. 'Tis true that Guido likes me passing well.
All Florence knows his verses are for me,
Such silly rhymes in truth I think they are,
Of birds, and gems, and flowers, and starry eyes.

Complacently.

Giov. Now lo, behold Dante himself draws nigh.

Hastily to interrupt Prim.

[*The ladies rise, dropping their garland and wreath, and advance to meet* DANTE, *who enters slowly at* L. *He is reading a book as he walks, and does not perceive them until they speak to him, when he gives a sudden start, and closes his book reluctantly.*]

Prim. (*curtseying*). Good morrow, Dante.

Tessa (*curtseying*). And welcome home again.

Giov. (*curtseying*). Perchance thou hast forgotten
me by now.

Dante (*bowing*). Good morrow, ladies.

Speaks very gravely, as if his thoughts were still with his book.

[*The ladies return to their seats, and resume their garland-making.*]

Giov. (*aside laughingly to* TESSA). Oh ! how grave
he seems.

Tessa (*to* GIOV.). In truth, I see no sign of smile
or jest.

With an emphasis on I in allusion to previous remark of Prim.

Prim. (*to* DANTE). How has it fared with thee
since yester noon ?

Prim. raises her voice to address Dante.

---

* Brunetto Latini, author of Le Trésor, &c. See *Inf.* xv.

Dante (*crossing to* R., *where he takes a seat near the ladies*). But yester noon! How much hath chanced since then?

With surprise and curiosity.

Giov. So much hath chanced!

Prim. Now, prithee, tell us more.

Archly.

Tessa. Was it a supper or a masquerade?

Dante. Supper or dance! In truth, 'twas none of these.

During this speech the ladies should let the garlands fall idly from their hands while they gaze at Dante with curiosity.

I had a dream in which Love came to me,
Not idle Love, the Love which toys with hearts
And hovers lightly in the sunny air,
But Love the spirit of my holiest dreams.
He came to me and showed me my ideal,

With increasing fervour.

And bade me strive to follow where it leads.
He held a crown—

[*Laughter from the ladies.* DANTE *gazes at them with pained surprise.*]

In truth it is no jest!
Wherefore this laughter? 'Twas no jest I spake.

They here resume their garland making.

Prim. (*controlling her laughter with difficulty*).
We will not laugh; we will be very grave.
The solemn import of thy words I see.
Who is the Lady?

Dante. Ask me not her name.
She is an angel clad in human form.
Her name shall not be uttered.

Tessa (*to* PRIM.). But the crown—

Prim. Why, true, he has not told us yet of that.

Turns to Dante.

(*To* DANTE.) We fain would know what crown it was Love brought.

With mock seriousness.

Was it the Emp'ror's he would offer thee?

Dante. No crown of Empire. 'Twas the poet's wreath.

Prim (*to the others*). The poet's wreath !

[GIOV. *and* TESSA *repeat* "The poet's wreath," *and laugh together.*]

Dante slowly rises and crosses to front of stage, where he stands at R. gazing earnestly before him. He should leave the book on his seat.

Tessa. Oh ! how I laugh. This Dante is most strange.

Prim. Now mark, I pray, his mien. See how he stands
And gazes with fixed eyes and heeds us not.

(*To* DANTE.) Where gazest thou ? What seest thou afar ?

Dante. I see a vision of the world to come.

[*The ladies again laugh, and exchange whispered remarks.*]

Dante. Why do you mock ? What is it makes you laugh ?
Is it at me ? Am I your merry sport ?
Is it my sacred dreams you treat with gibes ?

Turns to them with sudden indignation.

[*Brief pause. The ladies are somewhat discomfited, and hesitate to reply.*]

Prim. Well, Dante, truly you are somewhat strange,
With all this talk of love, and dreams, and crowns.

Rather apologetically.

Dante (*aside*). They mock at me ! I am a jest to them.

[*Soft music is heard, and the back of the stage partly opens disclosing* LOVE, *who is unperceived by the other actors.*]

Love (*very softly*). Thou shalt be scorned
By lesser souls.

[*The back of the stage closes again.*]

Dante is stirred and influenced by Love, though he is not supposed actually to see him. He stands aside still and soliloquizes.

Dante. Now help me, all ye holy powers on high,
To serve my Master even as I said.
I would stand firm as stands the castle tower*
Amid the howling winds of wintry nights,
Which beat on it with shrieking cries of ill
While yet it bends not to their fierce onslaught.
What boots the idle laughter of the throng
Against the steadfast purpose of the soul!

[*During this speech the ladies continue to laugh among themselves, and endeavour to attract* DANTE'S *attention. He takes no notice, and at the end they go off at* L., *carrying their baskets and garlands, and laughing and chatting, while* DANTE *remains in the same position as before, lost in thought.*]

[*Curtain.*

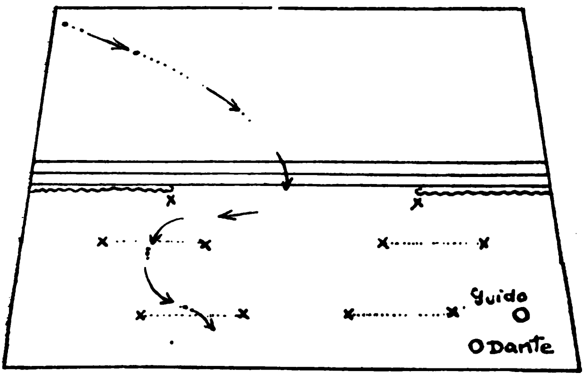
---

* See *Pur. v.* 13--15.

It happened that this most gentle lady came to a place where many gentle ladies were assembled; to which place I also was taken by a friend. . . . I seemed to feel a wonderful tremor, which, beginning in the left side of my breast spread quickly all over my body. . . . I lifted my eyes, and looking at the ladies saw amongst them the most gentle Beatrice. . . . Many of the ladies seeing me thus transformed began to marvel, and talk together, mocking at me with this most gentle one.

—*Vita Nuova XIV.*

SCENE IV.



AN OPEN SPACE.

[*A procession of ladies dressed in soft bright colours enter at* R2, *and pass under arches of flowers hanging from tall green standards. They are crowned with wreaths, and those at the back bear garlands, while those in front are playing quaint musical instruments. They move down the stage, keeping time to the music, and after*

All the stage should be disclosed for this scene and the lights on full.

grouping themselves at R. *join in a song, towards the close of which* DANTE *and* GUIDO *enter at* L1, *and stand at* L., *near front of stage.*]

SONG (*in Chorus).*

Tune—Italian Folk Song, *La Peppinetta.*

Hail to Spring in all her splendour,
  Flowers have blossomed, birds now sing,
Homage unto her we render,
  Homage, homage to the Spring.
    Hey-day, tra-la-la, la-la-la, la-la.
Flowers before her feet are strewn,
        And all around
        Is joyous sound
        The while we sing
        All hail the Spring!
Hey-day, tra-la-la, la-la-la, la-la,
  Hail, oh, hail to the beauteous Spring,
Tra-la-la, la-la, tra-la-la, la-la,
  Hail, oh, hail to Spring, to Spring.

Hail to Spring, let youth and maiden
  Praise her beauty fresh and sweet,
Boughs are now with blossom laden,
  Flowers lie strewn before her feet.
    Hey-day, tra-la-la, la-la-la, la-la.
Now our homage let us render,
        Hark, how around
        Is joyous sound
        The while we sing
        All hail the Spring.
Hey-day, tra-la-la, la-la-la, la-la,
  Hail, oh! hail the beauteous Spring!
Tra-la-la, la-la, tra-la-la, la-la,
  Hail, oh, hail to Spring, to Spring.

Dante (*to* GUIDO). *Now wherefore have we entered this gay throng?*

Guido. *To worthily attend these ladies fair.*
For this is Tessa's wedding and May day.

[*Enter* BEATRICE *and* PRIMAVERA *at* R2 *and stand at* C. *As they do so* DANTE *shows signs of great agitation. After some hesitation he finally moves a step or two in the direction of* BEATRICE, *and then hastily withdraws. Having thus attracted the attention of all present, he stands as before, overcome with confusion. The ladies meanwhile cast glances of curiosity at him, and whisper together, while* GUIDO *pulls him by the sleeve and endeavours to recall him to himself.*]

Beat. and Prim. stand at the front of raised stage.

Prim. (*advancing, and with a mock curtsey*).
Well, Messer Dante, dost thou see a crown?
Has Love appeared once more to bid thee serve?
Methinks it is a somewhat foolish love,
Blind, as old poets say, since thus thy glance
Wanders aside while beauty waits thee near.

Prim. descends to the lower part of stage. Beat. remains at C.

[*She turns and indicates the other ladies, who still whisper and laugh, with the exception of* BEATRICE, *who gazes at* DANTE *with an expression of interested wonder.*]

Prim. Now, while these ladies play, come thou and dance—
Oh, not with me. I am not overbold
To ask that for myself. Come, choose some other
From the waiting group fain now to tread a measure.

Hastily repudiating the possible inference.

[DANTE *leans against* GUIDO, *and takes no notice.*]

Prim. Nay? Ah! then I now perceive
Thou waitest still the tardy steps of one
Who lingers yet. Thy lady is not present.

Beat. here descends to lower stage.

Dante. I wait no lady.

Beat. (*coming forward with modest grace*). Wilt thou tread with me?

[DANTE *at first tries in vain to reply, but at last controls himself with an effort.*

Dante. Nay, gentle Beatrice,* not with thee.

Beat. goes back towards C., but does not remount the steps.

[BEATRICE *withdraws in some confusion, and the other ladies again laugh.*]

Prim. Well, Messer Dante, it is very clear
That gallantry is not a grace of thine.
(*With a shrug*) In truth no squire for dames. And yet, perchance,
Thou even now art making lover's verses
For some one who exists not.

Dante. The one for whom
I write, and live, exists, but not on earth.

With feigned surprise and consternation.

Prim. Then she is dead! (*Turns to the others*) Fair ladies, she is dead!

Dante. She is not dead—

Prim. Not dead, yet not on earth; how may that be?

Dante (*with sudden animation*). She treads this earth
But as an angel treads. Beneath her feet

---

* Beatrice (with the Italian pronunciation—Bay-ah-trèe-shay).

Virtues like flowers arise. Her holy soul
Shines with a light whence evil shrinking flees.

Prim. Then, by my faith, this lady's not in Florence.

Shrugging her shoulders.

Beat. (*to* PRIM.). Nay, let him speak—

(*To* DANTE). I prithee tell us more,
Nor heed if Primavera rail and mock;
It is her pastime merely.

Very gently

[DANTE *tries in vain to speak, and after one or two fruitless efforts, he turns away and buries his face in his hands overcome with confusion.*]

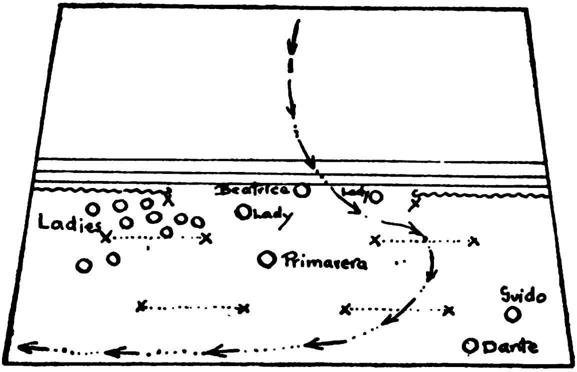
Guido should watch Dante with distress and try to restore his courage by whispering to him, plucking at his sleeve, &c. The ladies meanwhile whisper together and laugh.

Guido. Come, Dante, speak. The ladies wait to hear.

Dante (raising his head). Alas, I cannot speak. I have no words.

Recovers himself with an effort.

Beat. (reproachfully). No words to speak, and thou art called a poet.



[BEATRICE *turns away with a disappointed air and speaks to one of the ladies behind her. The attention*

The other ladies should look eagerly in the direction where Tessa is coming *of all is, however, almost immediately attracted by the sound of music, and* TESSA *enters at* C. *in bridal attire, attended by bridesmaids, and preceded by children scattering flowers. They move down the stage, and after crossing the front of it exit* RI. BEATRICE, PRIMAVERA, *and the ladies of the 1st Procession follow. When all have left the stage* DANTE *gives way to bitter weeping.*

Dante crosses to R.C. and flings himself on to the steps leading to raised stage. Guido follows and stoops over him.

With puzzled consternation and laying his hand on Dante's shoulder.

Guido. My friend, whence all this tumult of despair?
It seems as if some fountain in thy heart
Would never cease to flow. Why dost thou weep?

Dante. Had she but known, she ne'er had used me thus.

Guido. Who used you thus? What hand hath dealt the wound?

With passionate grief.

Dante. She is an angel, and she flouted me;
It was her beauty made my limbs thus fail;
She saw and with the other ladies mocked.

Guido stands looking at Dante with sympathetic pity. Dante rises.

I could not speak. I had no word to speak.
It was her gracious presence made me shrink,
Held fast my tongue and caused my soul to swoon.
Oh! had she guessed, but dimly guessed, those eyes

Paces restlessly across the stage.

Which quick respond to pity's lightest call
Had sent forth streams to heal my bitter pain.
She hath not guessed. She little recks that Love
At sight of her takes empire o'er my soul,
Chasing all else till he alone remains,
And thus transforms me to another man,
Who yet is I, since it is I who feel
This bitter grief, this fierce tumultuous woe.*

---

* See *Sonnet V. N.*, XIV.

Guido. Which is the lady?

Dante. Canst thou ask which one?
As rides the moon peerless among the stars
So still amid the rest she shines alone.
God's *youngest angel*, sent to light this earth,
With more than human virtue.

Reproachfully, and standing still facing Guido.

(*Places his hand on Guido's arm.*)
Yet, but mark,
Not as a lover is it I adore.
'Twere sacrilege to even dream to wed her.
She hovers near me from some higher sphere,
Her spirit in the heavenly ether floats;
Of earth she is not.

With ecstasy.

Guido. Faith I know her not
From thy description. But it seems to me
Thy love brings naught but grief and pain as guerdon.
Now I, I love for joy and not for woe,
And if woe come—(*shrug*)—why, then, I fling out love.
What benefit in tears and hopeless sighs?

Flings his arm lightly round Dante's neck.

Drops his arm again.

Dante. Full often too I would be free from Love
Which fiercely thus assails and rends my soul.
And then again my only hope is this—
To see once more the beauty lent to earth.
Then straight I wander forth and stand alone
And wait till she approach, and think to sate
My burning thirst by just one glimpse of her.
And lo! she comes, and as her footsteps fall
A tremour seizes me and power hath fled,
My eyelids sink, I barely see her face,
And she hath past, and left me more forlorn.*

Lays his hand confidentially on Guido's arm.

Guido. I see no object in this love of thine.

Draws back a step or two and looks at Dante with curiosity.

---

* See *V. N.*, XV. and XVI.

Dante. Just for the sake of that brief glance of her,
Just for the hope she may incline her head
And with that graciousness which suits her well
Accept my greeting. This alone I crave.

Shakes his head.

Guido. Alas! poor Dante, if such all thy bliss!

Dante. Nay, every praise of her is bliss to me.
(With sudden resolution) Henceforth my task shall be to sound her praise,*
That they who know her not may learn her worth,
And homage pay where 'tis most nobly due.

[*Curtain.*

---

* *V. N.*, XVIII.

SCENE V.

A STREET IN FLORENCE.

DANTE *leans against the wall at* L. BEATRICE *and* NELLA, *followed by two attendant ladies, enter at* R2 *with missals in their hands on their way to mass.* NELLA *is on the left of* BEATRICE, *so as to be between her and* DANTE. *They move down the stage, both curtseying to* DANTE *as they pass him.* DANTE *returns the salutation with signs of confusion. The ladies then exit at* R1. PRIMAVERA *and* GIOVANNA *enter immediately afterwards from* R2, *and pass to front of stage, while* DANTE *withdraws so far at* L. *as to be out of their sight.*

The whole stage required for this scene.

Prim. The secret is disclosed! Didst thou not mark
His ardent gaze as Nella passed him by?

Eagerly.

Giov. 'Tis true I saw him start; I saw love's shaft
Send crimson streams which, rushing to his brow,
As quickly faded, leaving it more pale.
Is Nella then the lady of his love?

Prim. Without a doubt. I am convinced 'tis she.
Now closely notice when they meet again,
And watch the signals.

[*Exit* PRIM. *and* GIOV. *at* R1.

Dante (*advancing*). They do not guess the truth.
Now God, my thanks I render thee for this.
No word of love shall bring my Lady down
To meet the vulgar world of gossip's tongue;
No shadow from my worship cause a blush
To stain the cheeks a god alone should kiss;

Dante stands near front of stage.

Reflectively.

No jest shall sully Beatrice's name.
But Nella—'tis a different matter there,
Her name is spoken oft by amorous youths,
And openly men vie to win her smile.
'Twould harm her not—'twould surely do no hurt—
If she were thought the object of my love.
Then be it so. Henceforth let Nella serve
As 'twere a screen between my love and me.

[*Curtain.*

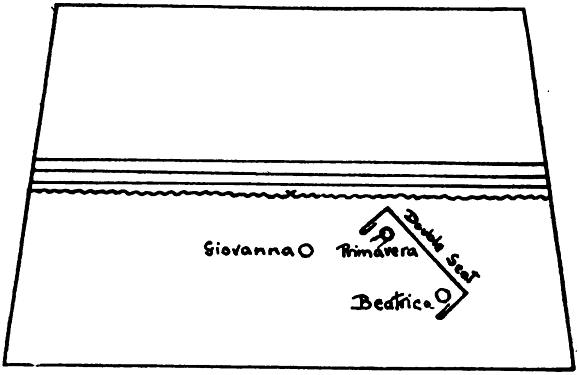
I made her my screen to such a degree that many talked about it beyond the limits of courtesy.

—*Vita Nuova X.*

It pleased the Lord of the Angels to call to His glory a young lady of very gentle aspect . . . and I recalling how I had last beheld her in the company of that most gentle Lady, could not restrain my tears.

—*Vita Nuova VIII.*

SCENE VI.



BEATRICE'S SITTING-ROOM.

BEATRICE *seated on a couch placed across* L., *with* PRIMAVERA *on her right, and* GIOVANNA *on a lower seat facing them.* BEATRICE *is engaged on some embroidery placed on a frame in front of her, while* GIOVANNA *and* PRIMAVERA *are winding coloured silks.*

Beat. Is there in truth some lady Dante serves?
Is he the lover of some living maid,
Or are his sighs but whispers from his verse,

Pauses in her work.

And all the symptoms men mistake for love
A mere reflection of a poet's dream?

Prim. (laughing). Nay, though a poet, Dante is a man.
Oh, he's in love; he's very much in love.

Beat. Is she in Florence, doth she tread these streets;
Or when he wandered culling flowers of lore
Met he with some one who enchained his soul,
And holds it captive still though far away?

Busily winding skein of silk which Giovanna holds for her, Beat. meanwhile slowly resumes her embroidery.

Prim. Nay, she is here in Florence, here they meet;
Their names are coupled openly by all,
And youths and maidens whisper at the signs
Of love's dominion when he sees her pass.

Beat. And do I know her? Prithee give her name.

Prim. Nella he loves. 'Tis strange to thee alone
Has come no echo from the common talk.

With sudden recollection putting down her silk.

Why she was with thee when I first saw signs
And guessed his secret, which is one no more.

With restrained interest and surprise.

Beat. Nella! 'Tis Nella. Art thou sure of this?

Prim. Certain I am 'tis Nella. (*To* GIOV.) Is't not so?

Carelessly.

Giov. Why, yes, of course; the whole of Florence knows it.

Reflectively.

Beat. We were together, say'st thou, when the signs
Which told his secret first thou saw'st disclosed?

Prim. 'Tis now some weeks ago we watched both pass
Near where he waited, on your way to mass,
Close by in San Michele; then we saw

Relates it with amusement.

At sight of Nella how he gazed and shook,
The while his frighted blood first dyed his cheek,
Then fled in rapid haste and left it pale.
His limbs, too, swayed, he seemed as he might fall,
And all the while his glances still pursued
Her fast retreating figure.

[*Both* PRIM. *and* GIOV. *laugh merrily at the recollection.* BEATRICE *alone remains serious and reflective.*

Beat. And Nella, doth she know he worships her?

Giov. Could any maiden fail to see the same,
She would, in truth, be blind as love himself!

Confidentially

And then, 'tis said, that others are afraid,
And somewhat hold aloof since Dante came;
That suitors are not eager for her hand,
And she is held a little light of love
To let him ever dangle after her.

Beat. (*with a sigh*). Is this indeed the truth?
(*Aside*) Alas, my poet! Hast thou sunk to this?

Prim. 'Tis fault of Dante,
For it seems no word direct he speaks,
But sighs and dreams.

Beat. And are his songs for Nella?

Prim. Well, so 'tis said. At news of Lucia's death
He cried, with sobs, 'So young and fair to die.'
Then swift the words, 'The last time that we met
She and my lady in the self-same throng
Moved bright with life and beauty.' *

Lets her hands fall idly before her.

Beat. 'Twas at the masquerade at Buondelmonti's.
I myself was there.

See *V. N.*, VIII.

Prim. And next he wrote a song of love and death.

Beat. Dost know this song?

Prim. I have the words by heart.

Beat. I prithee tell them me.

Prim. (*recites*).
'Weep, lovers weep, for even Love doth so,
And ye shall too full soon deplore the same;
Fair ladies now call Love in pity's name,
From gentle eyes the tears of sorrow flow.
For cruel Death hath sent his shaft of woe,
And pierced the noble heart of one fair dame;
Henceforth he for himself those charms doth claim,
Save that repute her graces here bestow.
Now heed what honour Love's own self doth pay,
For he these eyes did even now behold,
Bending above the form all chill and cold,
And yet anon fondly his glance would stray
To that far heaven, where in saintly fold,
Reposes her whose semblance was so gay.'*

Earnestly clasping her hands.

Beat. Oh! he can love. Oh! he can love and mourn.
He hath a noble heart, a poet's soul.

Engaged with her silks as she speaks.

Giov. No need to mourn, since Nella lives and smiles.

With a sudden change of tone at the reminder, and returning to her embroidery.

Beat. I like not that he leaves his love to drift;
Ill it beseems to let her name become
The common talk of gossip. 'Tis unworthy.
Last time I saw him, full on him I smiled.
Next time methinks my greeting shall be cold.
He is no man to trifle with a maid.

[*Curtain.*

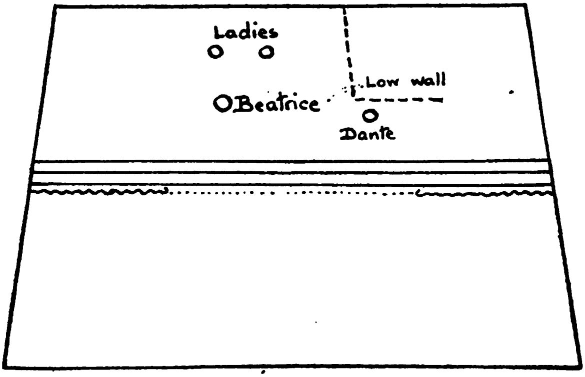
---

* Translation of Sonnet, *V. N.*, VIII.

And for this cause, namely, because of this injurious talk . . . this most gentle Lady, who was the destroyer of all vice and the queen of virtue, passing me by in a certain place, denied me that most sweet salutation in which all my blessedness consisted.

—*Vita Nuova X.*

SCENE VII.



A STREET IN FLORENCE.

Tableau.—BEATRICE DENIES HER SALUTATION.

DANTE *leans against the wall at* L., *overcome with grief.* BEATRICE, *with her two attendant ladies, passes down the stage from* C., *with her face turned away from him.*

Dante should stand with bent head and hand to his brow, slightly turned away from Beatrice who is supposed to have just passed him.

Now that my blessing was denied to me, I fell into such grief that withdrawing into a solitary place I bathed the ground with the most bitter tears . . . and then withdrew to my chamber, and there . . . crying, "Love, help thy faithful one," I fell asleep. . . . I then began to discuss with him (Love) about the salutation denied to me . . . and in this wise he replied to me, "This our Beatrice heard certain people saying of thee that the lady . . . was somewhat injured by thee, and therefore is it that this most gentle one, who is opposed to all evil, did not condescend to greet thee. . . . Now in order that the truth of thy long-kept secret may be disclosed to her, I wish that thou shouldst set forth in verse the power that I hold over thee through her, and how thou wert hers even from thy boyhood.

—*Vita Nuova XII.*

One am I who mark when Love inspires,
And in like manner that he in me speaks
I signify the same.

—*Pur. xxiv., 52-5.*

SCENE VIII.

DANTE'S CHAMBER.

DANTE *on a couch across* L. *as in Scene II. He moves restlessly as if in great distress, then speaks in a voice half choked with sobs.*

Dante. Love, help thy servant, help thy faithful one.

[A pause.

Oh ! Love, have pity for these grievous pangs,
By which I learn thy empire o'er my soul
Have torn and rent me. Now have pity, Love ;
I ask one glance, one smile alone from her—
No more I ask, no more entreat of thee ;

Is it so much to grant?—one smile, no more.
For she was wont to give me such a boon,
Out of her largesse she would dole out that,
And as I walked the streets, like summer sun
Her gracious glance would melt my frosty grief.
Now winter reigns. I see no sunny gleam.
She passed me by and paid no heed to me.
Love, help thy servant; I endure no more.

With bitter recollection.

[*He throws himself, face downward on the couch in an attitude of overwhelming grief, and gradually appears to sleep. Soft music is heard, and the back of the stage slowly opens, disclosing* LOVE.

Love should appear behind the gauze as in Scene II.

Love (*solemnly*). *The time hath come to cast pretence aside.* [*Weeps.*

Love covers his face with his hands.

Dante. Most noble spirit, wherefore weepest thou?

Love. Ask that alone it serveth thee to know.

Dante. She whom thou led'st me to as my ideal
Inclines to me no more. She hath denied
Her gracious salutation, and the cause
Why she withdraws it, fain am I to know.

Half rises. Music ceases

Love. It is the false report which spreads abroad.
She deems you love unworthily, another.

Dante. It was to screen her that I feigned the same,
Lest those who saw the signs I could not hide
Should dream I dared to love her; for I strove
To keep her name in that exalted sphere
Too far removed for mortal hope to reach,
Amid the angelic hosts, where she belongs.
For this I would not drag her name to earth,
Nor let men guess that it is she I worship.

With protesting eagerness.

Love. She knows it not, and that fair soul of hers
By which all false and craven is abhorred,
Deems you are following me unworthily.
For this her smile and greeting are denied;
For this it is she passed you coldly by.

Earnestly.

Dante. Sweet spirit, only say how I regain
That gracious token I have loved so well.

Advances and speaks in a commanding voice.

Love. Write as I bid, and let all things be clear.
Now let thy love flow out in jewelled words,
Chased with sweet harmonies and set with praise.
She shall know all. Speak of the early flame
That as a maiden still of tender years
She kindled in thy ardent boyish heart;
Then tell her how to thee I came erstwhile,
And led thee to her, how thou lov'st her still
As one who worships, watching from afar,
And dreams not of approaching. Thus she shall know
The truth at last, and hold thee free from blame.

Dante shows signs of joy and relief during this speech.

Sudden misgivings overtake Dante, replacing his joyful manner.

Dante. Fain would I stand revealed, yet much I fear.
Too bold it seems to send such words direct,
And pierce her modesty with shafts of love.
How should I write to one I hardly know
Save as a gracious influence to my soul?
Who am I that should dare to draw so near,
I, but a man! God's *youngest angel* she.

Love. As through another shalt thou write to her,
Take up thy song and bid it speak for thee,
Or call on me, and let me bear the word
Thy tongue can hardly utter. Not direct,
Not face to face shalt thou appear to her,
For thus thy words clad in more modest guise
May greet her better.

Dante (*eagerly*). How to gain her hearing
When the words are writ?

Love. They shall be sung
By young Casella,* who sweet strains indites,
And thus thy verses wed to gentle sound,
And winged by heavenly harmonies shall fall
In softest music on her listening ear.

[*The back of the stage closes, concealing* LOVE. DANTE *falls back and appears to sleep, then gradually shows signs of returning consciousness; he passes his hand across his brow as if trying to recollect what has occurred, then with a sudden inspiration seizes his tablet and begins eagerly to write.*

Music.

[*Curtain.*

---

* Dante's contemporary and friend, by whom some of his songs were set to music. See *Pur.*, ii.

And before I left my chamber I resolved to make a ballad, in which I should follow out what my Lord had laid upon me.

—*Vita Nuova XII.*

SCENE IX.

BEATRICE'S SITTING-ROOM.

BEATRICE *is seated on a couch at* L., *reading from a large folio, which she holds on her knee. Enter* CASELLA *at* R., *bearing a quaintly fashioned musical instrument.*

Casella (making an obeisance to BEATRICE). Fair
lady, thy consent I fain would have
To sing to thee a little song this while.

Graciously. *Beat.* Much it delighteth me to hear thee sing;
Thy voice the sweetest, and thy notes most true
Of any man in Florence. Is it thine own
This song thou bringest now?

Casella. The music is.
'Tis my great joy to wed with strains of mine
The tuneful verses of my poet-friend.

With assumed indifference. *Beat.* Who is thy friend? Guido or Frescobaldi,
Or is it Cino, from Pistoia come?

With enthusiasm. *Casella.* My friend is greater than the best of
these;
He writes but as his inmost heart dictates,
And burning words surge up from that deep well
To outlet find in magic cadences.
No poetaster he, a soul on fire,
Who writes what thing he must by genius led.
The rest will fade with rapid fading years.

Pauses and in a rather lower tone.

But he shall still endure, and stand alone,
Even as now he treads these streets alone,

With increasing animation.

But different much in this, that men shall speak
His name with bated breath, and point him out

Beat. becomes more and more stirred and interested. She slowly closes her book and places it beside her on the couch.

A landmark to the ages. Thus for him
Do I, the humble singer of his words,
Make bold to prophesy.

Beatrice. One alone
It seems to me your glowing words describe.
Who is your friend, Casella?

Casella. Dante.

Clasps her hands and turns slightly away from Casella facing the audience.

Beatrice. Dante!
(*Aside*) Did I not feel it, know that it was so.
Oh! poet soul, Oh! noble gifted soul,
Alas! if thou should'st seem in aught unworthy.

Turns back to Casella.

(*To Casella*) Casella, fain am I to hear thy song.

Casella sings.

SONG.

"GO, LITTLE LAY."*

Go, little Lay, and to my Lady wend,
And when thou pity and accord canst claim,
Let my excuses with thy music blend,
And crave her pardon in Love's holy name.
Go, little Lay.

Go tell her how that Love, thy willing guide,
Hath for her sake dominion o'er me sought;
And that for her, for her and none beside,
The man who sighs and weeps to this is brought.
Go, little Lay.

---

* The music for this song, specially written for the play by Mr. Rutland Boughton, will be found at the end of the volume.

Go ask her mercy, say how keen my pain,
  Since her most gracious greeting I forego;
Entreat that I receive her smile again,
  Since from that fountain springs my weal or woe.
      Go, little Lay.

Go, little Lay then, since I faint and die
  Unless her gracious pardon reach my soul;
Oh! tell her that to death her slave am I,
  Through her alone this tortured heart is whole.
      Go, little Lay.*

[*A brief pause, during which* BEATRICE *ponders over the words of the song.*]

Beat. Does Dante know this song would reach my ear?

Casella. To reach thy ear the song alone was written.

[*Casella bows, and exit* R.

BEATRICE *rises and walks a few paces with clasped hands lost in thought.*

Beat. 'Tis I he loves! 'Tis I alone he loves.
(*With great earnestness*) Spirit of Love now use me to this end
That he shall follow where all good doth lead,
And that this soul, cast in such noble form,
Be ever scornful of the low and base,
Be ever eager for the good and true.
If I be used to such a great result
Drops her voice. Gladly I live (*pauses while the premonition of her approaching death occurs to her*), gladly I too would die.
Perchance on earth his love might sink to earth,

---

* Adapted from *Ballata, io vo.—V. N. XII.*

While veiled by death I still could be a star
To guide his spirit upward through the night,
The while my soul freed from these earthly bonds
Might whisper to him from that world above
Of which we dream how vaguely here below.
Then welcome, Death, gladly I greet thee now;
Come, come, kind Death, and bear me to that sphere
Where I may guard untarnished his ideal,
And love and wait and watch, until he come.

Sinks on to the seat, and clasps her hands.

[*Curtain.*

And it seemed to me that I went to see the body in which had dwelt that most noble soul . . . and it seemed to me that ladies were covering her head with a white veil, and that her face had such an aspect of humility that it seemed to say, "I behold the very beginning of peace."
—*Vita Nuova XXIII.*

SCENE X.

Tableau.—DANTE'S DREAM OF LOVE LEADING HIM TO THE DEAD BEATRICE.*

BEATRICE'S CHAMBER.

BEATRICE *lies on a couch across* C. *facing* R. *Her hands are crossed on her breast, and her hair flowing loosely around her. Two ladies, one at the head of the couch and one at the foot, hold between them a white veil filled with hawthorn blossom, which they are about to place over her.* DANTE *stands in the shadow at* R., *gazing mournfully at* BEATRICE. *He is led by* LOVE, *who is in the act af bending forward to kiss* BEATRICE, *and who holds* DANTE *by the right hand, while in the left he bears an arrow, and a bunch of apple blossom. Red poppies are strewn on the floor.*
[*Soft music.*

---

* The arrangement of this tableau is taken from the painting "Dante's Dream," by D. G. Rossetti, the property of the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.

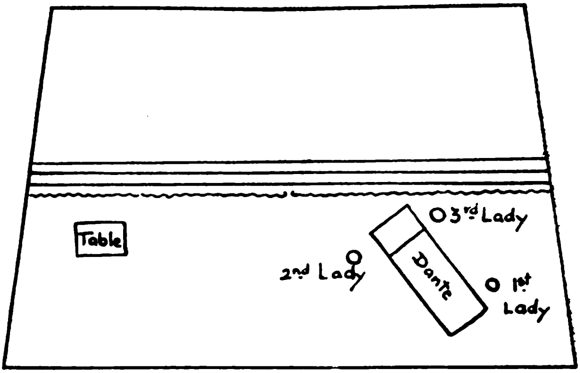
It happened that a grievous sickness befell me . . . and then there occurred to me a strange wandering of mind. . . . There appeared to me women with dishevelled hair who said to me, "Thou too must die," and after these women other faces horrible to behold, who said to me, "Thou art dead." Then . . . I knew not where I was, and I beheld dishevelled women go weeping on their way, of a marvellous sadness. And I thought I saw the sun darkened so that the stars showed of a colour which made me judge that they wept; and it seemed to me that the birds fell dead as they flew and there were mighty earthquakes. . . . I imagined that one of my friends came to me and said, "Dost thou not know? Thy wondrous lady hath left this sphere." I imagined that I looked towards the heavens, and seemed to see a multitude of angels who were returning upwards, and who bore before them a little cloud of most exceeding whiteness. And it seemed to me that these angels sang gloriously. . . . *Osanna in excelsis.* . . . I called upon Death and said, "Most sweet Death, come to me and do not treat me cruelly . . now come to me, for much I desire thee. Thou seest that I already wear thy colour." . . . Then the . . . ladies who were in the room drew near me to wake me . . . and spake many words to comfort me.

—*Vita Nuova XXIII.*

How doth the city sit solitary that was full of people! How is she become a widow that was great among the nations! . . . The Lord of Justice called this most gentle one to glory.

—*Vita Nuova XXIX.*

SCENE XI.



DANTE'S CHAMBER.

The first lady is seated near the foot of the couch on Dante's left, the second at the head on the right, and the third at the head on the left.

[*The stage is mostly in shadow, with the light arranged to fall on the part where* DANTE *will be seen at the close of the scene. He lies meanwhile on a couch placed across* L.C. *When the curtain rises it discloses him asleep, while the three attendant ladies watch round him. At* R.C. *is a table, on which a metal jug and goblet of antique design are placed.* DANTE *stirs and moans uneasily. He seems nearly to awake, and then sinks back again with a half-articulate cry, and remains very motionless. The ladies meanwhile watch him with the greatest anxiety, turning to one another and exchanging whispers.*]

First Lady. He seemeth as one dead.

Second Lady. Would that I knew
What best it were to give him. Maybe he sleeps.

Third lady has meanwhile bent closely over Dante.

Third Lady. To me it seems more likely that he swoon.

First Lady. Mark you how sad his face. It makes me weep
Myself to see such sorrow.* [*Weeps.*

[*A low sob escapes from* DANTE. *Then the words* "Oh! blessed Beatrice," *are faintly uttered.*]

Second Lady. Did you not hear?
It is for Beatrice that he mourns.

In an eager whisper to the others.

Third Lady. How knows he of her death, for none but us
Have entered this sick room to bring him news?

With wondering surprise and awe.

[DANTE *stirs and moans uneasily*].

Dante. Beatrice.

[*He suddenly awakes, and half raising himself on the couch gives way to a passion of tears. The ladies try to soothe him. The First Lady kneels by his side and strokes his hand, while the Second Lady fetches a cooling draught from the jug at* R., *and the Third Lady gently fans him.*

Dante buries his face in the pillows, and shakes with sobs.

Second Lady (handing him the draught). Nay, Dante, do not weep.
See, we are with thee, all in truth is well.

Third Lady (*anxiously*). Was it thy illness caused thee such distress?

[DANTE *takes the draught from Second Lady, and tries to recover himself. First Lady shakes his pillows, and he lies back on the couch growing gradually calmer.*]

First Lady should take the empty goblet from Dante and hand it to Second Lady, who replaces it on table

---

* A young and gentle lady, who was at the side of my bed . . . with great fear began to weep.—*V. N.* XXIII.

First Lady (*bending over* DANTE). Tell us what ails thee. Let us share thy grief.

Dante. Strange thoughts are sometimes harboured in sickrooms,

First and Second Ladies have meanwhile resumed their seats.

Strange dreams there enter, tangible as life,
And such a dream had I. First, ere I slept,
Upon my troubled soul had come the thought
How short our life, how frail the silken thread
By which the spirit holds us. Then there came
The further thought—I had not grasped ere now—
How she I deem of more than mortal worth
Must die like any other; and fierce within me
Rose the cry, "To gentle Beatrice
Death must come." And then it was I slept,
And in that fever'd sleep strange visions saw;

Shudders with horror as he recites it.

First women came, with wild dishevelled hair,
And mocked at me, while shrieking "Thou shall die!"
Then faces vague and horrible appeared
And mouthed, and muttered, "Nay but thou art dead!"

[*A brief pause, during which* DANTE *sinks back exhausted and the ladies whisper, and exchange glances of consternation.*

And next I walked, I knew not in what land,
And still those women moved with streaming hair,
And now they wept, and seemed most passing sad,

With increasing horror.

And on they moved, still weeping as they went.
Then o'er the sun a sudden shadow fell,
And blotted it until the stars were seen

Half rises and stretches out his hands.

Of dim pale hue, as though they also wept.
Then, horrible! the earth began to shake,
The solid earth, while birds which flew on high

Sinks back and drops his voice.

Fell dead before me, even as they soared;—
And all my soul was given up to fear. [*A pause.*

[*The ladies try to soothe him, but he pays no heed.*]

Then worse befell; yea, even worse than this.
For next it seemed it was a friend drew nigh,
And solemnly his whisper reached my heart;
'Hast thou not heard, the Lady of all Grace,
She who was lent a little while to earth,
Hath now departed from this mortal sphere?
Dead is thy Lady who was found so fair.'
And echoing still the words pursued my soul,
'Dead, dead thy Lady, dead, who was so fair!'

[*He sinks back overcome with emotion, while the ladies gaze at him in great pity.*

First Lady. And did this end thy dreaming?
Dante (*with sudden recollection*). Nay, not yet,
For swift another dream now followed this.
Methought towards heaven I looked, and there beheld
A multitude of the angelic host
Who soared still upward, bearing in their midst
My Lady's soul, as though a little cloud
Of most exceeding whiteness. [*A pause.*
And they sang!
Most gloriously the fast ascending strains
"*Osanna in Excelsis*" reached mine ear—
(*Remains rapt in ecstasy*).

He becomes animated, and a fervent, ecstatic manner replaces his overwhelming horror and melancholy.

With increasing ecstasy.

First Lady. And was this all thy vision?

Dante (*recalling himself with a start*). Still not all.
But now I knew that she in truth was dead,
Since I had seen her spirit soar from earth
To make glad heaven gladder.
Then it seemed,
Led by the Love which rules this heavy heart,
I saw the earthly house laid pale and low
Whence, but just now, the tenant soul had fled.
Beauteous she lay, her hands upon her breast,

Her long fair tresses as a halo shone,
And all her aspect breathed a holy peace,
While o'er her gentle ladies softly spread
A veil of snowy whiteness. Then I cried,
'Oh, come to me, kind Death, bear me too hence,
Deal not so harshly unto me, but come;
Be gentle, Death, since thou hast late left her
Whose very soul was that of gentleness;
And see, my pallor now bespeaks thee near;
Kind Death, forsake me not; bear me too hence.'*
And next a cold chill seemed to fall on me,
On earth I found myself, here in this room,—
On earth, who longed for Heaven!

[*A sound is heard of soft singing and of a tolling bell, and the funeral procession of* BEATRICE *passes outside. The ladies fall on their knees and cover their faces.* DANTE *raises himself and slowly assumes a sitting posture.*

Dante. What is that sound?
What are those weeping voices and the bell?

[*The ladies remain on their knees in silence.*]

With conviction.

It is my Lady's funeral passing by!
Oh! heart, thou spakest truly; she is dead.

[*A pause, during which the singing fades away, and the ladies rise from their knees.*

Dante (slowly rising). How desolate the city! How forlorn!
Earth, earth, how empty! She I love is dead.

Third and first Ladies cross to other side of couch.

[*The ladies watch him anxiously, coming forward with gestures offering assist-*

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* *V. N.* XXIII.

ance, which he refuses. He crosses the stage and stands at R., *gazing upward, while the ladies are grouped at* L. [*A pause.*

If limelight is used it can be thrown on Dante now.

Dante. I see her spirit in a mystic Rose*
Far off, far off amid the heav'nly spheres.
(*With rapture*) She beckons me, she bids me still pursue.
(*Sinks on his knees*) Now help me, Heaven, to my holy task.
I see and hear beyond this mortal screen;
A voice there is which bids me write of her
Such things as ne'er of one were penned before.†
Bright spirit lead me on through toilsome ways,
Past, past the woe where hell's foul tortures yawn,
High up the mount of penitential pains,
And then with thee at last to mount the stars!

[*Curtain.*

---

* Par. xxx. † *V. N.* XLIII.

Beneath a snowy veil, with olive crowned,
A lady there appeared; her mantle green
Fell o'er a robe the colour of bright flame.
—*Pur. xxx. 31—3.*

And from afar
It seemed that she looked down on me and smiled,
Then turned once more to the Eternal Fount.
—*Pur. xxxi., 91—3.*

SCENE XII.

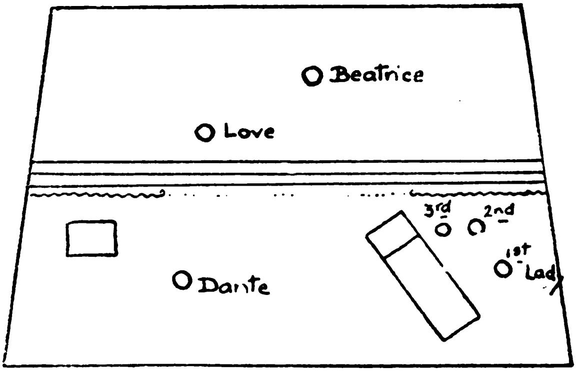

Tableau.—DANTE'S VISION OF THE GLORIFIED BEATRICE.

The Ladies should change their positions during the brief interval when the curtain is down at close of scene XI. Care must be taken that they are grouped well out of the direct line of vision to raised stage

Beatrice should be sufficiently raised in the Tableau to be seen above the couch.

The same as before, but with the curtains at the back of the stage withdrawn. DANTE *kneels in shadow at* R.C., *with clasped hands and upward gaze. The three ladies stand grouped together well back at* L.C. *watching him with wondering awe.* BEATRICE *and* LOVE *are seen at the back of the stage in a strong light. The former is clad as described in the Purgatorio, in a flame coloured* *robe, a green mantle, and a long white veil surmounted by a crown of olive leaves. Her hands are crossed on her breast, and her head is bent in the direction of* DANTE. *She is slightly raised above* LOVE, *who stands at her right and a little in advance of her, holding the laurel wreath towards* DANTE *in his outstretched hands. From the distance the sound of soft chanting is heard.*

[*Curtain.*

Dante faces the audience, who are supposed to be made partakers of his inward vision by the Tableau behind. The Gauze curtain can be used, and a lime light thrown on Beatrice and Love.

FINIS.

SUGGESTIONS

FOR THE

INCIDENTAL MUSIC.*

◆

The following music has been selected with a view to simplicity of performance, ease of comprehension, and, principally, that there may be no difficulty in procuring or in the preparation of it.

As a general rule, the pianist should play *forte* or *mezzo-forte* before the curtain rises, or when the actors are occupied with pantomine, making a sudden *diminuendo* directly speech recommences; and (in the case of the curtain music) melting right away into silence. This will, of course, be reversed when music concludes a scene, the fall of the curtain being the cue for a considerable *crescendo.* On such occasions, the printed marks of expression will be ignored. On the other hand, during the various tableaux, the music should be rendered as indicated by the composer.

The interval between the tableau, Scene X., and the following scene, should be made as short as possible, and the music continued without break. In Scene XI., the

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* The following selections for the incidental music have been made by Mr. Rutland Boughton, by whom also the music for the song in Scene VIII. has been specially written for this play.

Quando Corpus should, if practicable, be sung with the singers actually moving behind the stage, to give the effect of the procession passing outside. This should be carefully rehearsed with the accompaniment. The tolling of the bell will also need practice, and care must be taken to choose one which will harmonise with the music.

SCENE I.

No. 1. Music throughout, commencing before curtain rises. SCHUMANN, No. 1 from the *Kinderscenen*. Conclude at first convenient place after fall of curtain.

SCENE II.

No. 2. CHOPIN, Nocturne in G, op. 37, No. 2, commencing 57½ bars from end, and omitting the portion from bar 20½ to 8½ from end. Commence just before curtain. Cue to finish :—'In truth Thou art my Lord.'

No. 3. Cue :—'Another prize awaits.' BEETHOVEN, *Largo appassionato* from Second Piano Sonata. First 7½ bars only.

No. 4. Cue :—'Where thou lead'st I go.' Last 7½ bars of above CHOPIN Nocturne.

SCENE III.

No. 5. Curtain music. Eight bars of SCHUMANN, *Kinderscenen*, No. 3.

No. 6. Cue:—'I am a jest to them.' Last 7½ bars of the above CHOPIN Nocturne, passing directly on to the BEETHOVEN Sonata-movement as above, which continues until fall of curtain.

SCENE IV.

No. 7. Processional music and song. Italian folk-song, *La Peppinetta* (published in Boosey's 'Songs of Italy.') This is first to be played quite rhythmically, that the procession of ladies may duly step time thereto, and, when they are ready, to be sung in one or two parts to the *Spring Song*, words of which are to be found on page 12.

No. 8. Cue:—'And thou art called a poet.' WAGNER, Bridal Chorus from Lohengrin. (Published in separate form by Novello). The pianist must commence this as softly as possible, making a *crescendo* as the bridal party comes near, and a *diminuendo* as it departs. The vocal parts must, of course, be taken by the immediate performers.

SCENE V.

No. 9. Curtain music. Few bars of SCHUMANN, *Kinderscenen*, No. 1.

SCENE VI.

No. 10. Curtain music. First eight bars of the *Adagio* from BEETHOVEN'S Sonata in C minor, op. 13.

SCENE VII.

No. 11. Music throughout. BEETHOVEN, first movement of Sonata in C sharp minor, which is continued until curtain rises on

SCENE VIII.

and dies away with first words of Dante's monologue.

No. 12. Cue:—'I endure no more.' CHOPIN, Nocturne in G (see No. 2). Cue to finish:—'Most noble spirit.'

No. 13. Cue:—'On her listening ear.' Melody of the song, 'Go, little lay,' to be played by solo violin or 'cello, or hummed without words by three or four female voices.

SCENE IX.

No. 14. Curtain Music. SCHUMANN, few bars of No. 7, *Kinderscenen.*

No. 15. Song. See page 49.

No. 16. Cue:—'Gladly I live.' CHOPIN, Trio portion *only* of Funeral March from Sonata in B flat minor. Play as softly as possible, swelling as curtain descends.

SCENE X.

No. 17. Music throughout. Adagio from BEETHOVEN'S Sonata, op. 13; *or*, Neapolitan Folk-song, 'The

Window' (from Boosey's 'Songs of Italy'), to be sung by female voices. With the last few bars the curtain rises on

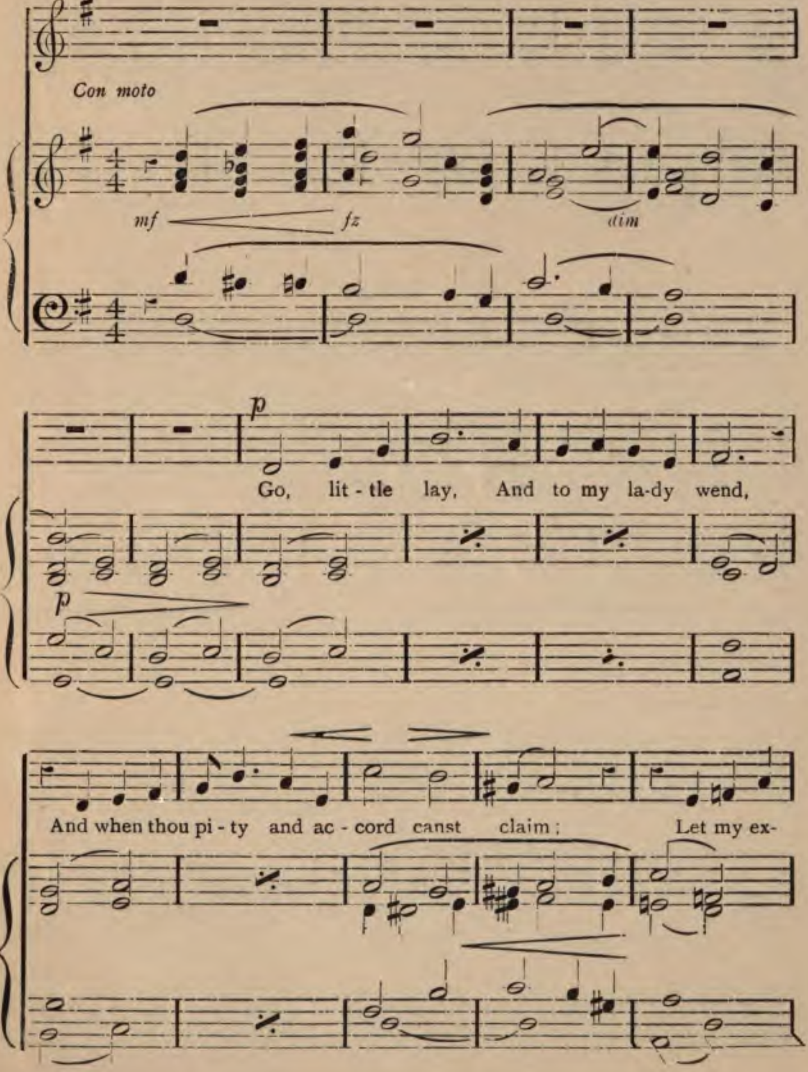
SCENE XI.

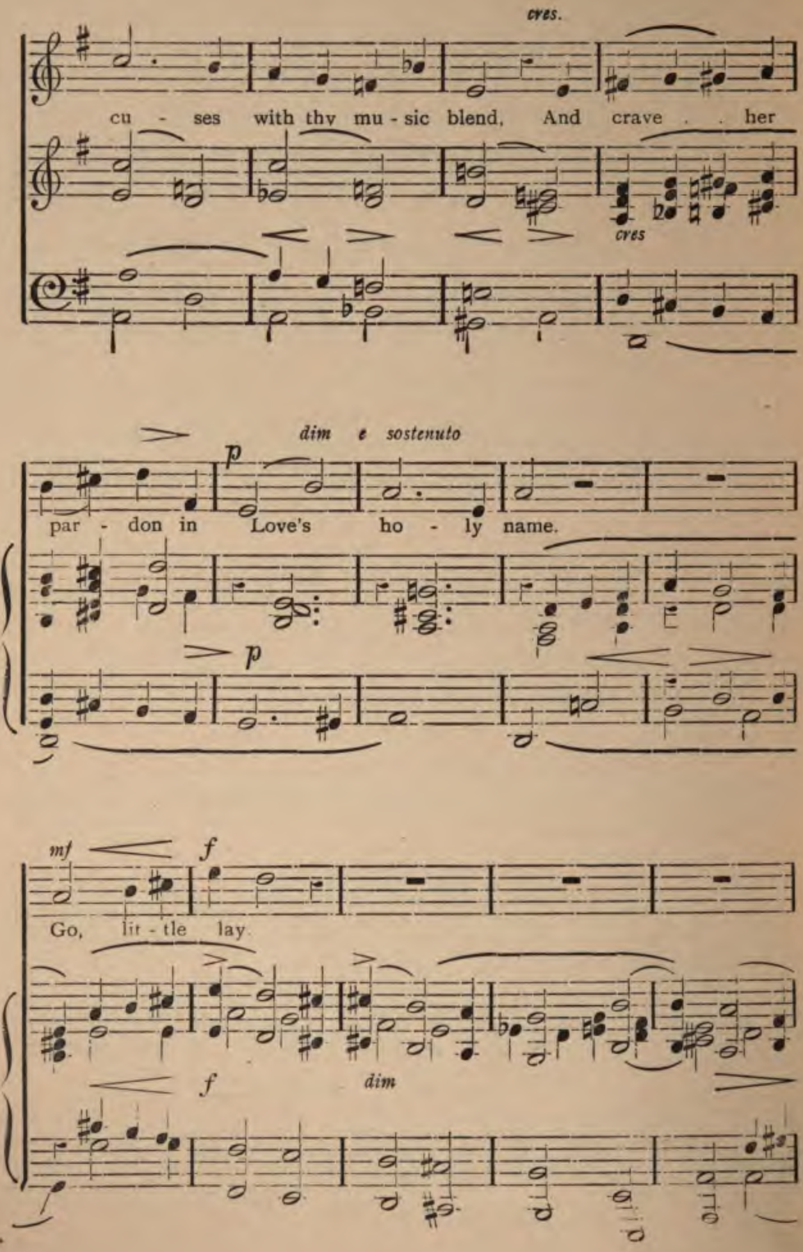
No. 18. Cue:—'Who longed for heaven.' *Quando corpus* from PERGOLESI'S *Stabat Mater* for female voices (pub. by Novello).

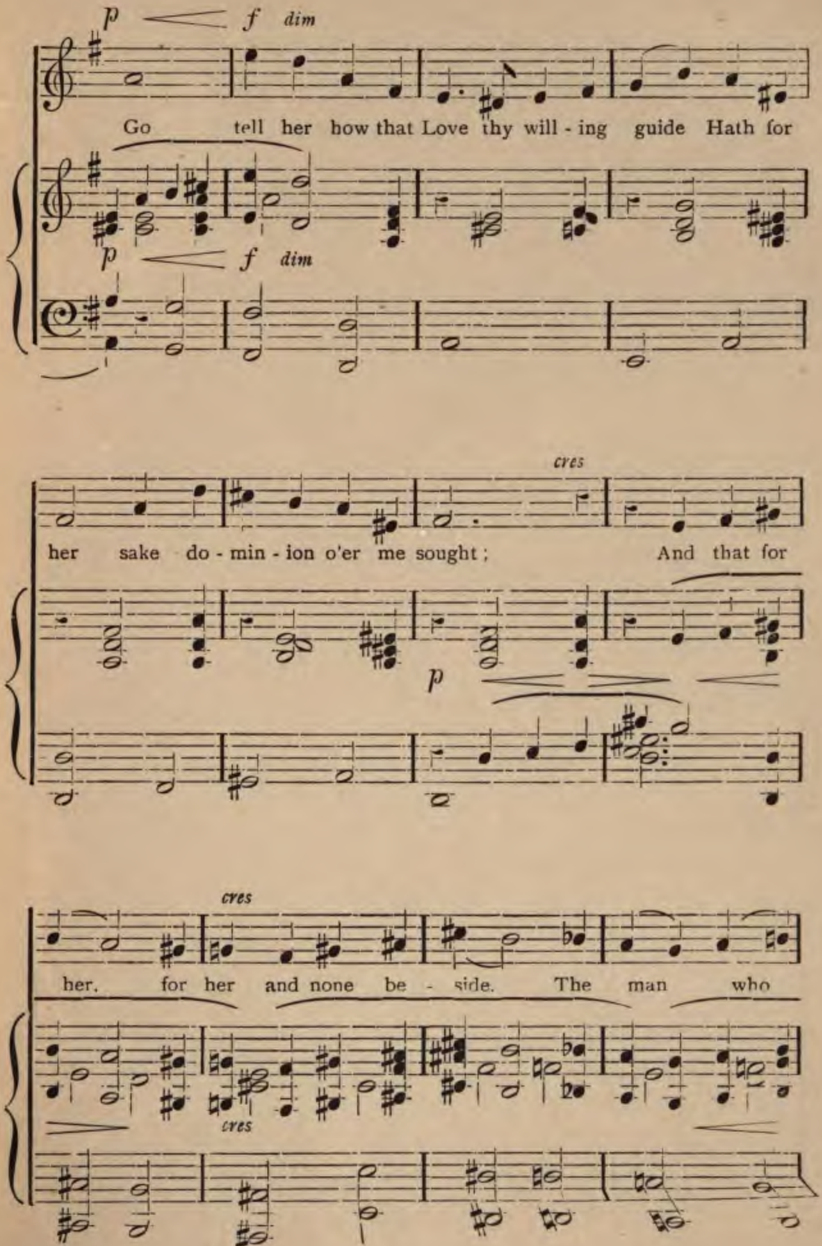
No. 19. Cue:—'To mount the stars.' CHOPIN, Nocturne in A flat, op. 32, No. 2. Commencing at bar 3, as far as bar 10. Commence *piano*, and swell to a *fortissimo*.

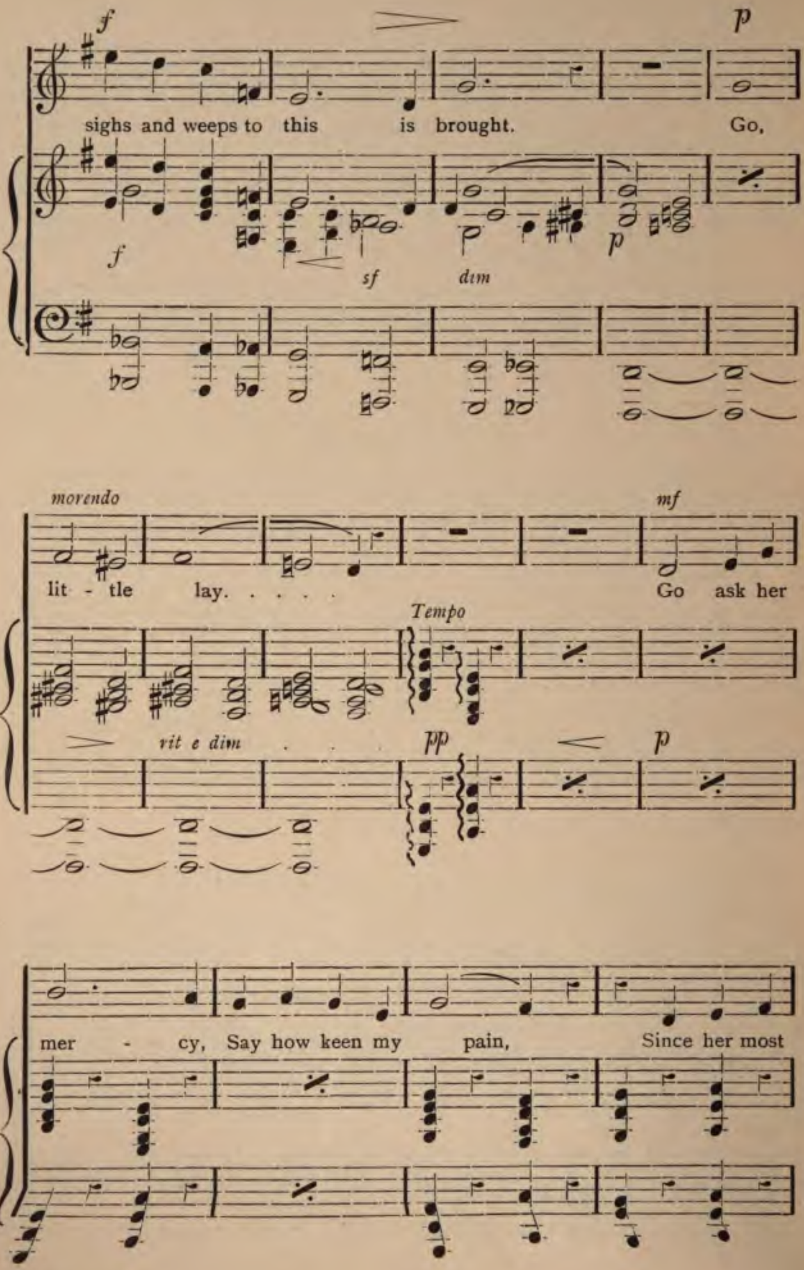
SCENE XII.

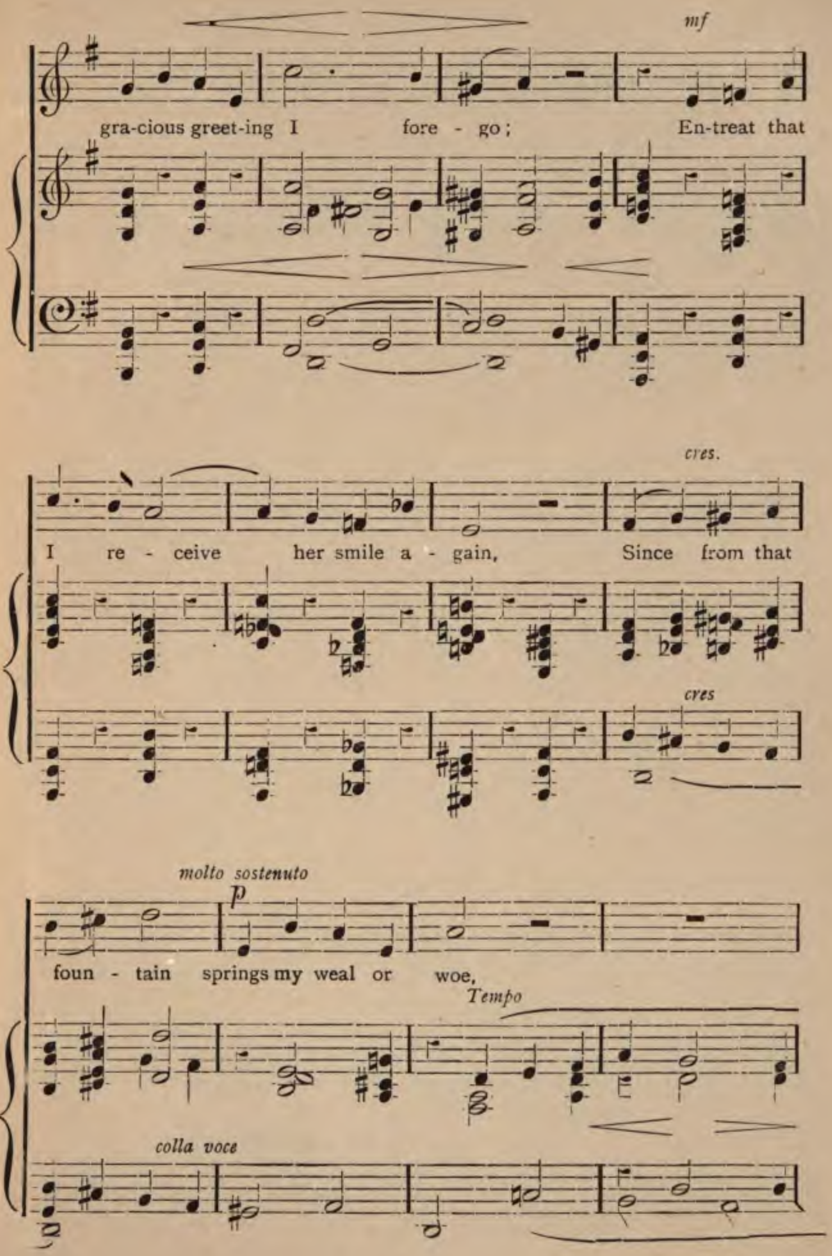
No. 20. Music throughout. PALESTRINA, Motett for three female voices, '*Jesu, Rex admirabilis!*' *or*, if two tenors and a bass are also obtainable, PALESTRINA, Mass, *O, admirabile commercium*; page 46, Novello's edition, commencing at *Osanna in excelsis* to end of the movement.

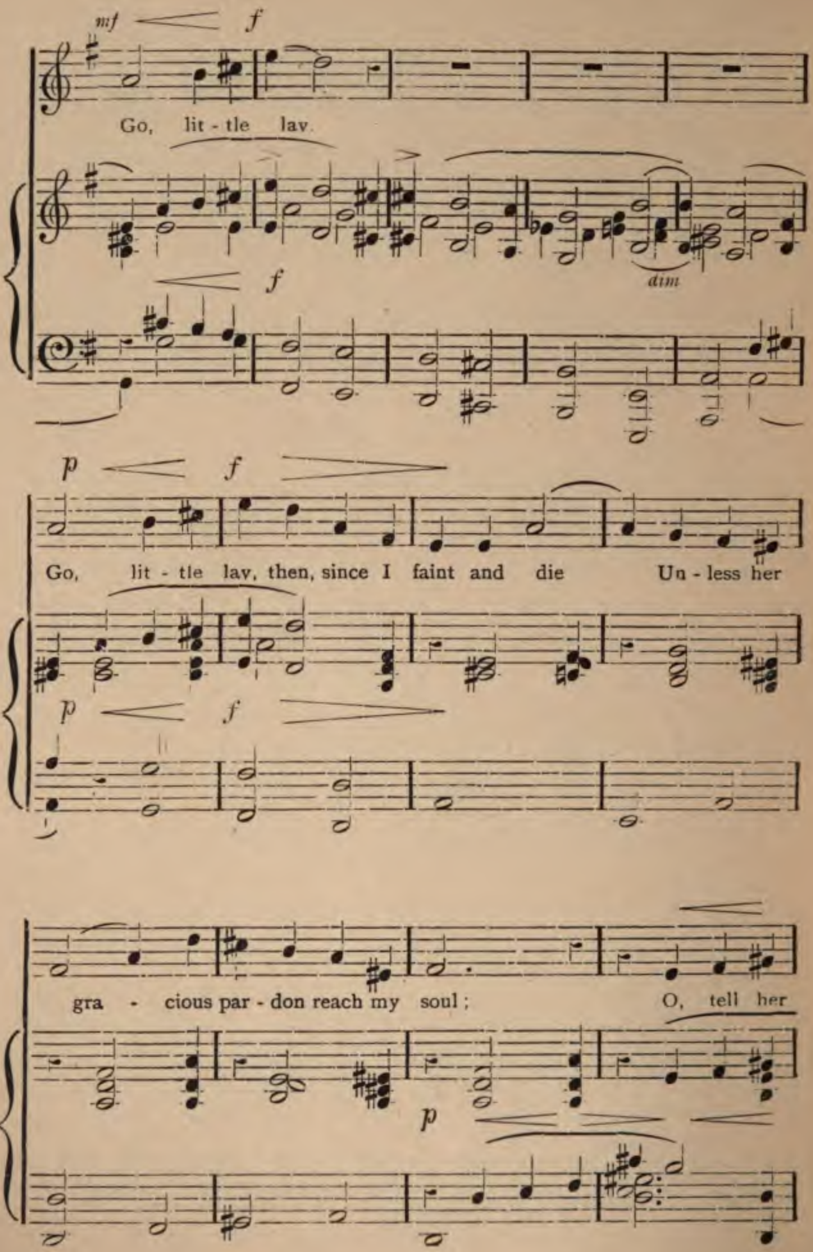

Con moto
mf
fz
dim
p
p
Go, lit - tle lay, And to my la-dy wend,
And when thou pi - ty and ac - cord canst claim; Let my ex-

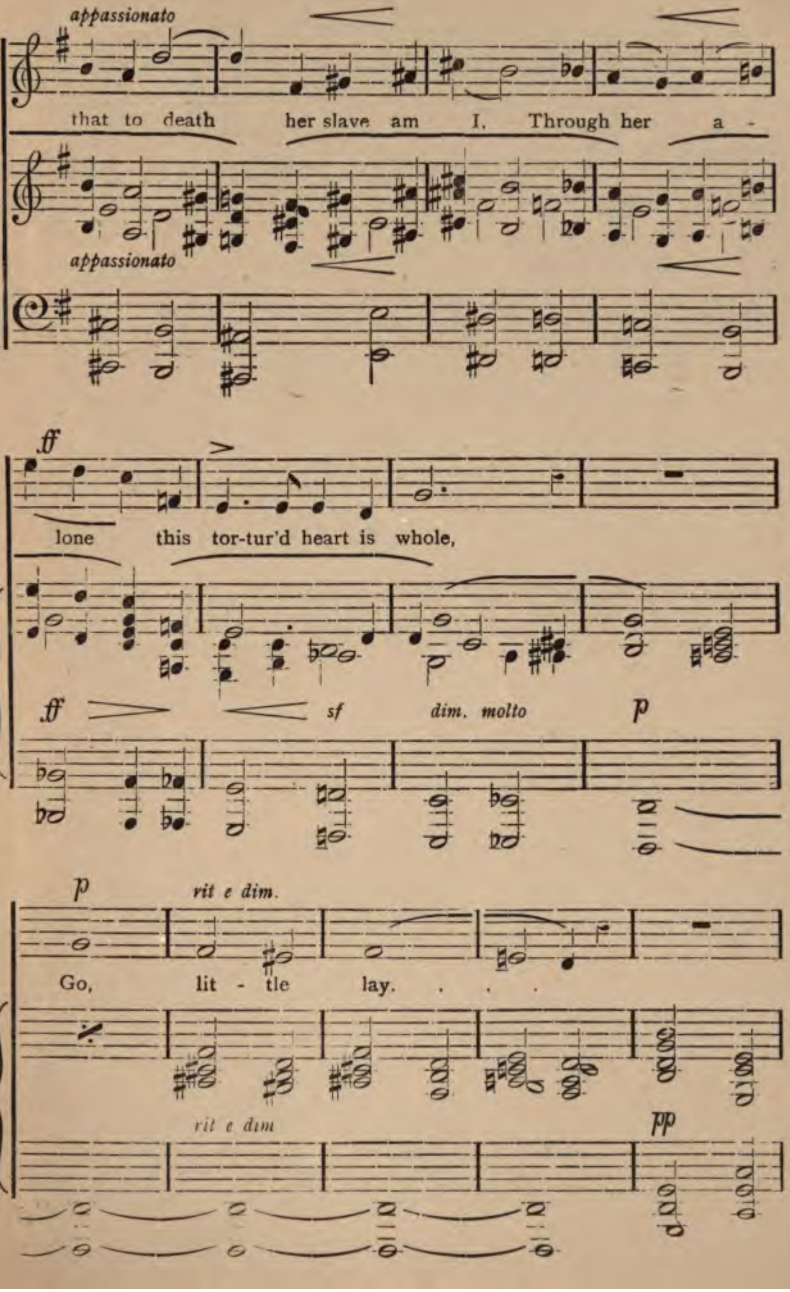

cres.
cu - ses with thy mu - sic blend, And crave . . her
cres
dim e sostenuto
p
par - don in Love's ho - ly name.
p
mf
f
Go, lit - tle lay.
f
dim

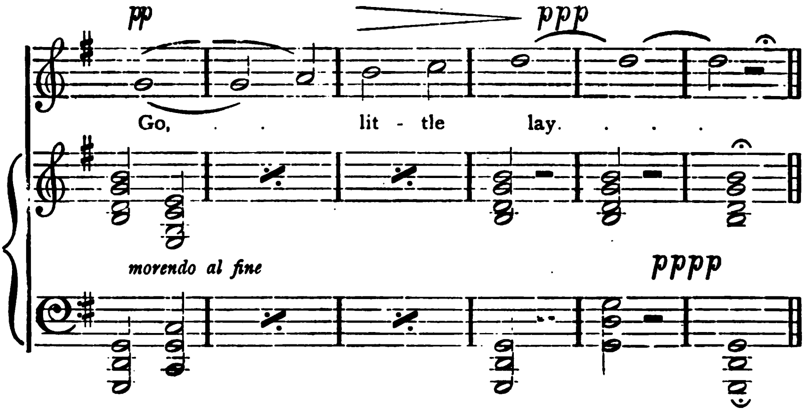

p
f
dim
Go tell her how that Love thy will - ing guide Hath for
p
f
dim
cres
her sake do - min - ion o'er me sought; And that for
p
cres
her. for her and none be - side. The man who
cres


f
p
sighs and weeps to this is brought. Go,
f
sf
dim
p
morendo
mf
lit - tle lay. . . . . Go ask her
Tempo
rit e dim
pp
p
mer - cy, Say how keen my pain, Since her most


mf
gra-cious greet-ing I fore - go; En-treat that
cres.
I re - ceive her smile a - gain, Since from that
cres
molto sostenuto
p
foun - tain springs my weal or woe,
Tempo
colla voce


mf
f
Go, lit - tle lay.
f
dim
p
f
Go, lit - tle lay, then, since I faint and die Un - less her
p
f
gra - cious par - don reach my soul; O, tell her
p


appassionato
that to death her slave am I. Through her a -
appassionato
ff
lone this tor-tur'd heart is whole,
ff
sf
dim. molto
p
p
rit e dim.
Go, lit - tle lay. . . .
rit e dim
pp



A separate edition of this Play without the Stage Directions, Costume Plates, and Marginal Notes, but containing a Frontispiece after D. G. Rossetti's "Dante's Dream," will be published at the price of 2/6 for the use of the book lover.

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